

## **Council for Trade in Goods**

### **Status**

The WTO Council for Trade in Goods (CTG) oversees the activities of twelve committees (Agriculture, Antidumping Practices, Customs Valuation, Import Licensing Procedures, Information Technology, Market Access, Rules of Origin, Safeguards, Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, Subsidies and Countervailing Measures, Technical Barriers to Trade and Trade-related Investment Measures (TRIMS)) in addition to the Textiles Monitoring Body (TMB), the Working Party on State Trading, and the Working Party on Preshipment Inspection). In 1999, the CTG held five formal meetings.

### **Assessment of the First Five Years of Operation**

At the conclusion of the Uruguay Round, the Council for Trade in Goods was established. It has proven to be a useful forum for discussing issues and decisions which may ultimately require the attention of the General Council for resolution or a higher-level discussion, and putting the issue in the broader context of the rules and disciplines that apply to trade in goods. The CTG serves as a place to lay the groundwork and to resolve issues on many matters that will ultimately require General Council approval. The use of the waiver provisions, for example, often are initiated in the Goods Council. One question that has been raised is whether the Council on Goods is needed given the fact that issues and recommendations are sent forward to the Ministerial Conference via the General Council. The Services and TRIPS Councils report to the General Council directly, so there may be value in reflecting on this question further.

### **Major Issues in 1999**

As the central oversight body in the WTO for monitoring agreements related to trade in goods, the CTG addressed a number of important issues in 1999. Much of its attention was devoted to providing formal approval of decisions and recommendations proposed by its subsidiary bodies. The CTG also served as a forum for airing initial complaints regarding actions taken by individual Members with respect to the operation of agreements under its purview. Many of these were resolved by interested Members through consultations, although some were subsequently pursued through the Dispute Settlement Body.

The actions taken by the CTG in 1999 include:

- < Approval of the Working Party Report on Preshipment Inspection.
- < Referral of a number of newly notified regional agreements to the Committee on Regional Trading Agreements for consideration of their consistency with WTO obligations.
- < Approval of the extension of a number of waivers, including those related to implementation of the Harmonized System and renegotiation of tariff schedules, tariff preferences by developing countries to least developed countries, and a short extension of the transition period for implementation of the Agreement on Customs Valuation by one country and referral of these to the General Council for final decision. (Annex II of this Report lists waivers currently in force.)

### **Work for 2000**

The CTG will continue to discharge its responsibilities as the final approving body for decisions and

recommendations made by its various subsidiary bodies. The Council will continue its work on waivers, as it did in 1999. The United States will continue to use the CTG as another means to draw attention to problems related to monitoring and compliance. Given the renewed attention to implementation of existing Agreements, expiry of transition periods in a number of rules agreements (e.g., Customs Valuation and TRIMS) and staging of market access commitments from the Uruguay Round, the CTG is poised to play an active role in the enforcement efforts of WTO Members. In light of experience to date, and the work of the General Council on implementation issues, the United States will assess suggestions to streamline the WTO Committee process and merge the functions of the CTG, which would require modification of existing Agreements.